

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: _____ F. _____

Date: _____ May 24, 2006 _____

Topic: First Review of Recommended Cut Scores for the Standards of Learning Writing Tests for Grades 5 and 8

Presenter: Mrs. Shelley Loving-Ryder, Assistant Superintendent, Division of Assessment and Reporting

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Origin:

_____ Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

☒ Board review required by

_____ State or federal law or regulation

☒ Board of Education regulation

_____ Other: _____

☒ Action requested at this meeting _____ Action requested at future meeting: _____ (date)

Previous Review/Action:

☒ No previous board review/action

_____ Previous review/action

date _____

action _____

Background Information:

In spring 2006 new Standards of Learning (SOL) writing tests for grades 5 and 8 were administered. These new writing tests measure the 2002 English SOL and were developed according to a revised blueprint. Consistent with the process used to set cut scores on the other SOL tests, committees of educators were convened to recommend to the Board of Education minimum cut scores on the grade 5 and 8 writing tests that represent the achievement levels of pass/proficient and pass/advanced.

Summary of Major Elements:

Information about the range of cut scores recommended by the committees for the writing tests at grades 5 and 8 for the achievement levels of pass/proficient and pass/advanced will be presented to the Board. The Board is asked to review this information and to adopt cut scores on the writing tests at grades 5 and 8 that represent the achievement levels of pass/proficient and pass/advanced.

Superintendent's Recommendation:

The Acting Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board waive first review and adopt cut scores for the writing tests for grades 5 and 8 that represent the achievement levels of pass/proficient and pass/advanced.

Impact on Resources:

N/A

Timetable for Further Review/Action:

N/A

Standard Setting Bookmark Procedure

Standard setting is a systematic way of making a professional judgment on the number of score points on a test that must be earned to signify that a student has reached a specified criterion. The number of score points that a student must obtain is called a “cut score.” In the case of the *Standards of Learning (SOL) Writing Assessments*, three performance level categories have been established:

Advanced Attainment of the Standards (Pass)
Proficient in the Standards (Pass)
Does Not Meet the Standards (Fail)

One cut score will be established to distinguish *Proficient in the Standards* (Pass) from *Does Not Meet the Standards* (Fail). A second cut score will distinguish *Advanced Attainment of the Standards* from *Proficient in the Standards*.

For the Standards of Learning English: Writing Tests at grades 5 and 8 students respond to multiple-choice questions and write a brief paper on a topic given to them at the time of testing. The number of multiple-choice questions the student answered correctly is added to the number of points the student earned on the brief paper to derive the student’s total score on the test.

The standard setting procedure used for the Standards of Learning English: Writing Tests at grades 5 and 8 is known as the Bookmark procedure. One of the reasons this procedure was selected is that it is designed for use with tests where students answer multiple-choice questions and write a short paper. Listed below are steps followed in the application of the Bookmark procedure:

1. Panelists are presented with a general definition and description of standard setting as being a systematic way of making a professional judgment about how many points a student must achieve to meet a specified criterion.
2. Panelists take the multiple-choice component of the English: Writing Test to simulate the experience of students who have taken the test. Panelists are not asked to write a paper.
3. Panelists discuss and develop definitions and descriptors of the three achievement levels (i.e., Does Not Meet, Proficient, and Advanced). Panelists discuss definitions of “barely proficient” and “barely advanced.” The purpose of this task is for the panelists to define the particular knowledge and skills that separate those students who *are barely proficient in the content standards for writing* from those who *do not meet the content standards*. Similarly, panelists are to define the particular knowledge and skills that separate students who are *advanced in the content standards for writing* from those who are *proficient in the content standards*.
4. Panelists receive training in the application of the Bookmark procedure.

In the Bookmark procedure the multiple-choice questions are ordered in a booklet from easiest to hardest based on Spring 2006 information. The easiest question is the first question in the book while the hardest question is the last question in the book. Interspersed among the multiple-choice questions are examples of student papers. These student papers also are ordered from low score to high score. Thus, a low score on the brief paper would be toward

the front of the book while a high score would be toward the back.

Panelists are asked to move through the ordered test booklet and to think about the knowledge and skills exemplified by the multiple-choice questions and the scores assigned to the writing papers. Panelists are asked to place a “bookmark” in the test booklet at the point where the questions and papers **prior to the bookmark** exemplify knowledge and skills that a student must have to be considered *barely proficient*. Panelists place a second “bookmark” at the place in the test booklet where the questions and papers **prior to the bookmark** exemplify knowledge and skills that a student must have to be considered *barely advanced*.

5. Panelists participate in a practice activity using the Bookmark procedure.
6. ***Round 1 Ratings:***
Panelists receive ordered test booklets and are asked to independently place two “bookmarks” in the test booklet. The first “bookmark” is placed where the questions and papers **prior to the bookmark** exemplify knowledge and skills that a student must have to be considered *barely proficient* in writing. The second “bookmark” is placed where the questions and papers **prior to the bookmark** exemplify knowledge and skills that a student must have to be considered *barely advanced*.
7. ***Round 2 Ratings:***
Panelists are provided with a table of each judge’s ratings from Round 1, refine the definitions and descriptors of the performance levels, and repeat the process used in Round 1.
8. ***Round 3 Ratings:***
Optional.
9. At the conclusion of the final round, the panelists have completed their task. The results of their work will be presented to the Board of Education as ranges of potential cut scores. Two ranges will be presented. The first range will represent potential cut scores delineating *Does Not Meet the Standards* from *Proficient in the Standards*. The second range will represent cut scores distinguishing *Proficient in the Standards* from *Advanced Attainment of the Standards*.